AGAINST THE NEXT WAVE

John 14:17

i Morning : Wind

Has it come, then, the time foreseen
in hopefulness, when a debt to the sea
would be paid, faithfully?

Once I dreamed of a drowning
that on waking I took for real,
feeling surf's thunder surround me
in the unfathomed world;
lacking in all but youth's
confusion in my veins,
I ran from wind and tide
looking for shelters to bide
and to keep
to a separate peace.

How you might have laughed
at my race, at the ocean
of my unease,
but you stole quietly by
giving enough to cease
to be feared;
too long the fugitive thought
in deed to be set free,
in true desire to be.

At time's ebb then I stood
with a vision barely brave
of a gift I would freely bring,
human, not of the sea:
this hazard, born of earth,
to cast against the next wave;
for love is strong as death.

ii Noon : Sand

If the waters did part,
it was not for my good;
on the dry, godless ground
I felt deserts grow inward,
a parching of blood.

Casting about in a new wilderness
I scarcely knew what I was
looking for, or would find;
so stranded the mind.
Unreclaimed the land
withheld revelation,
the deadening ground undivined.

Where you were even then
it was not mine to know.
Perhaps what I saw
was a picture, a shadow far
off, that the glare of indifference
turned from and kept by
like a speck in my eye,
obtrusive, obstructing, yet staying:

your power to stay outlasted
my power to run away.

Coming nearer, you hid,
as in mist, bringing rain,
holding out a hand only
across the dry waste,

and in my blind thirst
was a sense of griefs rupturing,
obscurely flowering.

iii Evening : Breakers

Is it to be now, then,
to meet face to face
the truth I would offer
against the next wave?

Meeting you, the wave
breaks.
I see you at last:
the waters of pain in your eyes
wash over me: sorrow is mine,
your sorrow too
deeply mine.

I am lost in your ocean,
my feet on the ground,
and what I have found
I do not understand;

to the sea from the land
I have followed each call,
through directions unnamed
simply sensing the wind,
like a gull on the wind
thrown to you through time.

This ocean I tread in,
your drowned and your drifting,
they reach to me, each
your face and your tears:

Oh Christ, is it true
that I drown in these waves
toward you?